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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PREF](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA UPDATE: OCTOBER 18

REF: MOSCOW 11629 AND PREV.

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Russell. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary -----

1. (C) Deportation orders against Georgian continue; the Georgian Embassy claims about 1000 Georgians have been told to leave without being detained. Georgians are expected to take Russian citizenship in greater numbers as a protective move. Georgian restaurants are reopening. The official mood remains dour. Russian officials still say the time is not yet ripe for renewed dialogue with Georgia; Georgians expect continued confrontation. End Summary.

Deportations and Georgian Nationals -----

2. (C) The body of the Georgian who died at Domodedovo Airport October 17 while awaiting deportation will be flown to Tbilisi October 19 at Georgian government expense, Georgian Ambassador Chubinishvili told us. After the October 17 flight, some 7-8 Georgian nationals remain detained in St. Petersburg. In addition to those detained in Moscow (reftel), reports are arriving of detentions in Sochi, Kaliningrad and elsewhere, but the Georgian Embassy cannot get specific numbers until it sends its consular officers to the sites. Chubinishvili claimed that 1000 Georgians have received orders to leave the country, though they have not been detained and are supposed to depart by themselves.

3. (C) Chubinishvili said that of the 250,000 Georgian nationals in Russia, many have dual nationality (formally illegal, but the Georgians turn a blind eye). The Georgian Embassy therefore has no idea of the numbers of vulnerable. Chubinishvili cited cases of Georgian nationals with professional positions and high social standing who have been told by friendly officials that their residence/work permits could not be extended when they expire, but if they choose to seek Russian citizenship their applications will be facilitated. One such person was the grand-daughter of former President Shevardnadze, who refused to consider changing nationality.

Reopenings -----

4. (C) Chubinishvili met us at the re-opened Tiflis restaurant (Moscow's best Georgian food), and the lights are back on at Pirosmeni (which once hosted President Clinton). Both had closed voluntarily for a week, though inspectors had combed through Tiflis looking for violations. The Kristal Casino has reopened. Its owner is not Georgian, but an Armenian with Russian citizenship who had the misfortune of being born in Tbilisi. This allowed corrupt officials to close it down -- and demand large bribes to let it reopen.

No Mood for Talk

¶5. (C) Russian MFA South Ossetia negotiator Yuriy Popov told us Moscow is still not in the mood for dialogue with Georgia at any level. "The dust will have to settle," he said, adding that Georgia will have to make the first approach to Russia. He bemoaned the stalemate at the Joint Control Commission on South Ossetia, and asked the U.S. to persuade Georgia to participate in the current format, and drop demands that it change, as a goodwill gesture to Russia. He had no suggestions on next steps or how to re-package the negotiations to allow all to save face and get back to work.

Prospects for Conflict

¶6. (C) Popov said Russian officials believe (from intelligence sources, he intimated) that Georgia will soon show a display of "muscle" in South Ossetia to disrupt the referendum and elections planned for the separatist entity. He dismissed Georgian fears that Russia was urging the Abkhaz and Ossetians to confront Georgia militarily. Chubinishvili reiterated those fears, saying the likelihood of confrontation in Kodori is high. Russia will continue to press for the withdrawal of all Georgian arms from Kodori and then, "as they did in Sukhumi," occupy the region.

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